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ABSTRACT

Drawing on a social cognitive understanding of the relationship between television and viewers which suggests that adolescents will seek media content consistent with their already developed notions about the sexes, a study surveyed 1,613 adolescents (aged 12 to 17). Respondents were drawn from 10 standard metropolitan statistical areas that are similar in social and demographic characteristics and spread throughout the southeast United States. Randomly selected adolescents and their mothers completed baseline questionnaires in their homes from April through October of 1985. In April through October of 1987, the adolescents and their mothers again completed questionnaires. Only black or white adolescents who provided data for both rounds were included in the tabulation. Results indicated that white girls who expressed the least stereotyped beliefs about male-female relationships in 1985 spent more time than other white girls watching traditionally male-oriented programs in 1987. Watching female-oriented television in 1985 reduced 1987 sexism scores for white boys and girls, while watching male-oriented programs increased sexism scores for black males. Results revealed the need to view adolescents as active participants in their own sexual socialization. (Four tables of data are included, and 31 references are attached.) (MM)

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Television Viewing and Adolescents' Beliefs about Male-Female Relationships

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ABSTRACT

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Television Viewing and Adolescents' Beliefs about Male-Female Relationships

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Correlational, experimental and at least two longitudinal studies have provided evidence that watching television may help to "cultivate" adolescents' beliefs about sex-role and sex-trait stereotypes. The present study draws on an alternative, social cognitive understanding of the relationship between television and viewers, suggesting that adolescents will seek media content consistent with their already developed notions about the sexes. The results, based on a panel study of 1,613 adolescents, show that white girls who expressed the least stereotyped beliefs about male-female relationships in 1985 spent more time than other white girls watching traditionally male-oriented programs in 1987. Watching female-oriented television in 1985 reduced 1987 sexism scores for white boys and girls, while watching male-oriented programs increased sexism scores for black males. These results point to the need to view adolescents as active participants in their own sexual socialization.

Television Viewing and Adolescents' Beliefs about Male-Female Relationships

With the exception of its impact on children's learning of aggressive behavior, television's role as a perpetuator of sex-role stereotypes has been arguably the most hotly debated potential effect of television in the past decade or two. Content analyses of television programs and commercials from the earliest days of television have shown consistently that women have been underrepresented, limited to stereotypical occupational roles and personality traits and victimized more often than men.

While few content studies have been conducted in the 1980s, earlier studies have shown that male characters outnumber female characters approximately three-to-one in prime-time television programs, a ratio Tuchman (1978) has characterized as "the symbolic annihilation of women." In action-adventure programs, female characters are even rarer, representing only 15 percent of all leading characters (Miles, 1975). The presentations of women who do appear in television programs have been consistently stereotypical, in terms of both sex roles -- those occupations society accepts as most suitable for women --and sex traits -- the personality characteristics and interpersonal behavior styles believed to be "normal" for women (Gunter, 1986).

Sex-role stereotypes

Television programs typically depict women as being primarily concerned with "hearth and home" (Tuchman, 1978). In a content analysis of four years of programs, Tedesco (1974) found that marital status could be identified for 51 percent of female

characters but for only 32 percent of male characters. Even in settings outside their homes, women are portrayed as being more concerned with family and other relationships than are men. In one study, 74 percent of female interactions, but only 18 percent of men's, dealt with personal relationships; work-related interactions, on the other hand, accounted for 15 percent of women's interactions, compared to 35 percent of men's (McNeil, 1975).

In the world of television, women who have jobs outside the home usually work in traditionally female occupations -- nursing, secretarial jobs, waitressing. Males outnumber females in all professional occupations, including teaching. In addition, married women are far less likely than married men to successfully mix marriage and child-rearing with careers. While nearly 60 percent of real married women also are employed outside their homes, only 26 percent of the employed women on television are or have been married (Signorielli, 1988).

Sex-trait stereotypes

Stereotypes also are evident in the personality traits displayed by male and female television characters. Television women, more than men, have been portrayed as needing more emotional support (Greenberg, Richards & Henderson, 1980), being dominated (Lemon, 1978), taking more advice and orders, being less aggressive (Turow, 1974) and feeling less in control of their own lives (Hodges, Brandt & Kline, 1981). In comparison to males, female television characters also generally are younger, more attractive, more nurturing, more concerned with romantic

interests and more likely to be victimized, particularly if they have jobs outside their homes (Signorielli, 1988).

The consistency of stereotypical portrayals of men and women has led many researchers to conclude that watching television may help to produce or at least reinforce children's beliefs in sex-role and sex-trait stereotypes. Cross-sectional surveys of children, adolescents and adults have generally shown that the heaviest television-viewers are also the most likely to express sexist attitudes regarding appropriate occupations for and relationships between men and women (Signorielli, 1988). In a study of 8th- to 10th-graders, Gross and Jeffries-Fox (1978) found that the heaviest television viewers were most likely to give sexist answers to questions about women's ambition, access to education and important jobs and preferences for home-making and child-rearing. Gunter and Wober (1982) found similar predispositions toward occupational stereotypes among British adults who were heavy viewers of "action-drama" programs. In their study, heavier viewers of action-drama content were more likely than light viewers to believe that women want to be mothers and do not want careers and to say that women ought to be that way. On the other hand, the heavy action-drama viewers also were more likely to see women as self-reliant, not quarrelsome with other women, not preoccupied by romantic affairs and not dependent on physical attractiveness to succeed.

At least two longitudinal studies (Morgan, 1982; 1987) have provided evidence that heavy television viewing helps to bring the views of the least sexist viewers into line with mainstream

attitudes about male and female occupational roles, measured by their answers to such questions as whether fathers and/or mothers should have full-time jobs, whether men have more ambition than women and whether women are happiest keeping house and caring for children. In a two-year study of 6th- through 10th-graders, Morgan (1982) found no effect of heavy television viewing on occupational sexism for boys, although the most sexist boys from the first round of the study were found to be the heaviest television viewers in the second round. Among girls, however, Morgan found that heavy television viewing "cultivated" more sexist attitudes for middle- and upper-class girls. Lighter television viewers among girls at the middle and especially the highest socioeconomic status levels were the least sexist. A similar pattern, though not significant, was found in the comparison of low-, medium- and high-IQ girls, with heavy television viewing increasing sexist attitudes more as IQ levels increased. Morgan concluded that the data "support the proposition that heavy viewing works to bring into the mainstream those who would otherwise be on the periphery" (1982, p. 954).

Morgan (1987) also found support for the mainstreaming hypothesis in a second study of the links between adolescents' television-viewing, sex-role attitudes and behaviors. Heavy viewers were most likely to express sexist attitudes, and this relationship was particularly strong among the boys who were <u>least</u> likely, and among girls who were <u>most</u> likely to exhibit stereotypical behaviors.

Durkin (1985) has criticized Morgan's "tenacious adherence" (p. 196) to the conclusion that television viewing has a cumulative effect on girls' sex-role stereotypes, noting that in the 1982 study, Morgan has difficulty explaining modestly significant associations between amount of viewing and sexism scores for medium IQ boys in the third year of the study, yet regards the weaker correlations for high IQ girls as evidence supporting the mainstreaming hypothesis. Other widely cited correlational studies, according to Durkin, suffer from methodological and statistical problems and have often produced contradictory results. In his review of the research on television's impact on children's sex-role stereotypes, Durkin concludes that neither correlational nor experimental studies have provided "convincing evidence that television does contribute greatly to sex-role development" (1985, p. 201).

The theoretical underpinning for Morgan's studies is Gerbner's "cultivation theory," which argues that "the more time people spend watching television, the more likely they are to perceive the real world in ways that reflect the patterns found in television drama" (Morgan, 1982, p. 948). From this perspective, viewers are seen as essentially passive "recipients" of the television images they watch.

The present study draws on an alternative, social cognitive understanding of the relationship between television images and audiences. Social cognitive theorists argue that rather than simply imitating behaviors he or she has seen rewarded and avoiding behaviors that were punished in television programs, the

child actively "seeks out information about gender roles and then monitors his or her own behavior so that it is consistent with the gender-role norms" (Parsons, 1982, p. 33).

This view of the child as a more active participant in his or her socialization implies that the child will look for gender-role or gender-trait models that are consistent with or salient to already developed notions about gender. According to Gagnon and Simon (1973), these developing "scripts" for gender-appropriate behavior -- particularly behavior in male-female relationships -- will differ substantially between boys and girls. For girls, gender scripts will revolve around "commitment to affect-laden relationships and to the rhetoric of romantic love," while for boys, the scripts will be related to "other main patterns in male gender role training -- autonomy, aggression, control, achievement, normative transgression" (Gagnon and Simon, 1973, p. 71.)

Chodorow's (1974) work, too, suggests that boys and girls will develop essentially diametrically opposed orientations toward relationships. Because boys usually are raised by their mothers and have far less interaction with their fathers, the development of masculinity, Chodorow argues, "involves a denial of attachment or relationship, particularly of what the boy takes to be dependence or need for another" (1974, p. 51). Girls, on the other hand, spend more time with their primary gender role model, so that "a girl's gender and gender role identification are mediated by and depend upon real affective relations" (p. 51). The result of their differential access to and

relationships with their same-sex parent, Chodorow says, is that girls are "pressured to be involved with and connected to others, boys to deny this involvement and connection" (p. 55). Gilligan's work (1982) with female development of moral reasoning also finds this greater emphasis by girls on connection and interdependence and by boys on autonomy, objectivity and rules.

Social cognitive theory predicts then that when watching television, girls will look for programs that focus on relationships and interdependence, while boys will prefer shows that provide models of autonomous, independent behavior. Audience studies (primarily of adults) strongly suggest that gender differences in program preferences indeed reflect these different emphases on relationships versus independence. Men make up the largest part of audiences for sports programs and for action-adventure shows, while women prefer serial dramas (both day- and night-time "soap operas") and situation comedies (Papazian, 1986).

While no content analyses, to our knowledge, have examined explicitly differences in interdependence versus independence across program categories, some studies have provided evidence of these differences. Sprafkin and Silverman's (1981) content analysis of touching on television programs shows that behaviors associated with nurturing or warm relationships, including "supportive/affectionate touching," kisses and hugs, all occur with greater frequency in the dramas and situation comedies preferred by women, while acts of aggression occur far more frequently in crime/adventure programs.

The primary themes on daytime soap operas, a genre also preferred by women, are interpersonal problems, ranging from criminal activities to health problems to romantic and marital affairs. The primary activity is conversation, either about the character's business dealings or about family matters, romantic relationships or illnesses (Katzman, 1972).

A 1960s-era study of prime-time westerns revealed that the three main character types in these shows -- villains, heroes and protagonists, who are helped by the heroes -- all displayed "individualistic" behavior (Topping, 1965). Comstock et al., (1978) argue that this characteristic also would be true of the present urban crime dramas, which have essentially replaced westerns in viewer popularity, because both westerns and urban crime series focus on the punishment of criminal deviance and feature official and unofficial law enforcement agents.

The social cognitive perspective on gender role socialization suggests that the apparent differences in program types' emphases on relationships versus independence helps explain differences in male and female preferences for serial dramas, situation comedies, action-adventure programs and sports. Men may choose sports programs and action-adventure shows because the characters in these shows provide examples of how men can maintain their independence, assert their autonomy, gain approval and adulation for displays of aggressiveness and exercise objective, rational thinking to solve dilemmas. Women, in turn, may select soap operas and situation comedies to be reminded of or to learn new ways of handling relationship problems, to see

others rewarded for subjugating their own wishes to the needs of others, to be reassured that "good" women invest their energies in nurturing and supporting others. In other words, we would expect both men and women to choose television content that is salient to the gender roles they have learned and that can be expected to provide continuing reinforcement for and models of gender-appropriate behavior.

We should point out that the notion of audiences selecting content that reinforces previously held beliefs is not new. Selective exposure theorists have long argued that audiences choose content that either supplies gratifications -- "transitory mental or emotional responses providing momentary satisfaction at an intrinsic level" -- or uses -- "characterized by anticipated postexposure application of the mediated experience to attaining pragmatic goals" (Atkin, 1985, p. 63). In the latter case, Atkin argues, media exposure

> is a means to an end, as the individual seeks helpful informational inputs for extrinsic purposes such as learning new behaviors, solving problems, making decisions, coping with environmental forces, and strengthening predispositions; this is frequently based on uncertainty-reduction needs. Nonexposure may also be utilitarian as the individual avoids or ignores messages that may increase uncertainty, particularly content that challenges predispositions. (pp. 63-64)

In a sense, viewing different gender preferences in television programs as manifestations of differing male and female scripts is simply an expansion of selective exposure theory. Learning about new gender-appropriate traits and behaviors and reinforcing existing beliefs constitute one set of needs viewers expect to fill through the selection of particular

types of television programs. From this perspective, females who have accepted most fully the traditional expectations about women's roles in relationships should be most likely to spend their television-viewing time with shows emphasizing relationships -- soap operas and situation comedies. Males who express the strongest beliefs in stereotypical views of male-female relationships and differences should be more likely than less sex-typed males to prefer sports and action adventure shows.

Interestingly, Morgan (1982) found evidence of such a relationship but preferred not to characterize the relationship as selective viewing. In his study, boys who expressed the most sexist attitudes about male and female occupational roles in the first wave spent the most time watching television a year later, after other potential influences had been held constant. Morgan states that

> if the dependent variable were violence rather than sexism, it could be argued that a propensity for aggression leads to the desire to observe it, which is achieved through heavy viewing. It is more tenuous to assume that boys who hold more sexist views about women are drawn to television to see their stereotypes confirmed (1982, p. 954).

From a social cognitive perspective, the argument does not seem tenuous at all. The only qualification we would make is that we would expect boys who hold more sexist views about women and men not simply to watch more television overall but to be drawn to television shows that particularly emphasize the male perspective on relationships, in order to "see their stereotypes confirmed."

In a study designed to test the cultivation hypothesis assumptions that "television is essentially uniform in its

presentation of symbolic messages" (Rubin, Perse & Taylor, 1988, p. 110) and that cultivation effects are "the result of unselective, ritualistic, and habitual television viewing" (1988, p. 111), Rubin, Perse and Taylor found that audience members' perceptions of social reality -- including their faith in others, the feelings of control over their own lives and their connectedness to others -- were associated with viewing of different program genres. For instance, faith in and trust of others were related negatively to time spent watching daytime serials. Watching action/adventure shows was related positively to greater concern for personal safety, while overall exposure to television was associated negatively with safety concerns. Rubin, Perse and Taylor concluded that television effects are linked to content selectivity and individual audience members' attitudes and activities, not simply to high levels of exposure to any kind of television programming.

The present study was intended to test the relationships between adolescent boys' and girls' scores on a scale measuring attitudes toward male-female relationships and their viewing of traditionally gender-typed programs as well as their total time spent with television. Our expectations were that boys expressing the most sexist attitudes during the first round of the study would report spending the most time with traditionally male-oriented programs and the least time with traditionally female-oriented programs during the second round. Girls who expressed the most traditional attitudes toward male-female relationships, on the other hand, were expected to report

watching the most female-oriented television and the least male-oriented television during the second round.

Studying the relationships between sexism and time spent with traditionally male-oriented or traditionally female-oriented programs seems especially appropriate for adolescents because both sexism and time spent with television normally decline during these years. Although adolescents today almost certainly spend more time watching television than teens did a decade ago, research continues to show that 12- to 17-year-olds spend less time watching television than any other age group (Comstock et al., 1978). Almost by definition, then, teenagers would be expected to be more selective viewers of television than either younger children or adults.

In addition, Parsons (1982, p. 35) argues that adolescence is a particularly important time for changes in beliefs about gender-roles and traits. According to social cognitive theory, a child's acquisition of gender roles depends on the behavior of those around him or her, the child's interpretation of those behaviors, the responses of others to the child's behavior and biological changes within the child. With the onset of puberty, Parsons argues,

> biological forces make the need for sexuality greater (and) some children move beyond rigid gender roles and adopt more androgynous or egalitarian views of appropriate behaviors and sexual scripts. (1982, p. 35)

To compare the competing predictions of the cultivation hypothesis with those of the social cognitive approach to understanding media effects, the following hypotheses were tested:

1. Girls who express the least traditional beliefs about male-female relationships at T_1 will report watching more male-oriented programming at T_2 than will girls with more traditional relationship beliefs.

2. Boys who express the least traditional beliefs about male-female relationships at T_1 will report watching more female-oriented programming at T_2 than will boys with more traditional beliefs.

3. Adolescents' beliefs about male-female relationships at T_1 will be unrelated to the amount of time spent watching television overall at T_2.

4. Adolescents' beliefs about male-female relationships at T_2 will be related to time spent watching either traditionally male-oriented or traditionally female-oriented programs at T_1, but will not be related to overall television exposure at T_1.

Methods

Sample

Adolescents and their mothers were surveyed as part of a study conducted to evaluate mass media campaigns aimed at adolescents. Ten standard metropolitan statistical areas (SMSAs) that are similar on social and demographic characteristics and spread throughout the Southeast United States were in the study. Randomly selected adolescents aged 12 to 15 and their mothers completed baseline questionnaires in their homes from April through October 1985.

Of the eligible adolescents, 2,105 agreed to participate in the study, producing a response rate of 83.1 percent. In April through October 1987, the adolescents and their mothers were asked again to fill out questionnaires; 77 percent of those included in the original sample were available and agreed to participate in the second wave of the study. For these analyses, only black or white adolescents who provided data for both rounds

of the study are included; the 24 adolescents who were Asian, Hispanic, or Native American were excluded from these analyses because there were too few for separate consideration. Of the remaining 1,613 adolescents, 29.7 percent were black and 49.5 percent were female. The data are aggregated across the 10 SMSAs for these analyses.

Because previous research has established that there are significant differences between the amount of time black and white teenagers spend watching television (Comstock et al., 1978), the relationships between sexism and the television viewing measures were analyzed separately for blacks and whites.

Measures

In order to provide a partial replication of Morgan's (1982) finding, we used measures of the same characteristics included in Morgan's analysis whenever possible. The following independent variables were constructed:

Parental education: Mothers were asked how far in school they and the fathers of the adolescents had gone, and adolescents answered the same questions about their parents' education. The mothers' 1985 reports of parent education were used except when her report was unavailable; we used the adolescents' reports of parent education for 224 mothers and 464 fathers. This measure was used primarily as an indication of the family's socioeconomic status (SES) and is similar to Morgan's SES measure, which was based on father's education and occupation. The measure used in the analysis used the father's education if it was available and

mother's education when father's education was missing; mother's education was used for 258 cases.

Maternal employment: Mothers were asked if they worked outside the home. The dummy variable included in the analysis had a value of 0 if the mother was not employed outside her home and 1 if she was.

School achievement: Mothers were asked to indicate whether, compared to other children in school, their adolescents were superior, better than average, average, lower than average or failing. This measure was used as a substitute for IQ scores, which Morgan used. This measure was recoded so that higher scores represented higher achievement levels.

Grade: Adolescents were asked what grade in school they were in.

Because we wanted to test the direction of any relationships between sexism and viewing of specific program types as well as total television viewing time, the following measures were used either as dependent or as independent variables, depending on the point in the analyses.

Relationship Sexism: Respondents' relationship sexism scores were based on their responses to six of 14 statements about men and women. The original 14 statements were derived from those used in the Gunter and Wober study (1982). These statements were then subjected to a principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation. Two factors emerged, and the strongest and most stable factor was chosen for analysis. The final sexism

scale was based on adolescents' responses to the following statements:

Most women like to show off their bodies.

Most men want to go out with women just for sex.

Most women can't be trusted.

Most women are concerned only about whether men like them.

Most women quarrel a lot with other women.

Most women depend on men to get them out of trouble.

Respondents chose between "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree" or "strongly disagree." A respondent's sexism score was computed by adding across his or her responses to these items and dividing the total by six. Respondents with the highest scores on the sexism scale are the most sexist.

Reliability estimates (Cronbach's alpha) for the sexism index ranged from .63 to .71 for 1985 and from .64 to .75 for 1987. Averaging across all four subgroups yielded alphas of .66 for 1985 and .69 for 1987.

Total television time: Adolescents were asked, "During the school year, how many hours of television do you watch in each part of the day: On a typical school day (Monday through Thursday); On a typical Friday; On a typical Saturday; On a typical Sunday?" Respondents' total television scores were produced by summing across all of these categories to provide an estimate of total hours of television viewing each week.

Gender-typed television: Two measures, "Male TV" and "Female TV," were constructed from respondents' answers to questions about how often they watched soap operas, situation comedies,

action-adventure shows and sports programs. For each program type, adolescents reported whether they "never" watched, watched "some days," "most days" or "every day." Because previous audience research has shown that soap operas have the highest percentage of female viewers and sports programs have the highest percentage of male viewers (Papazian, 1986), responses to these categories were given double weight. The Male TV measure combined responses to the sports and action-adventure questions, while the Female TV measure combined responses to soap opera and situation comedy questions.

Results

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for the participants' demographic characteristics within race and gender subgroups.

Table 1 about here

As can be seen in Table 1, the percentage of adolescents whose parent had less than a high school education ranged from 17.5 percent for white girls to 37.4 percent for black girls, while the percentage of parents who completed at least four years of college ranged from 8.4 percent for black boys to 28.7 percent for white girls.

The percentages of working mothers remained relatively stable between 1985 and 1987 for blacks, but increased dramatically for white adolescents. Overall, approximately 65.7

percent of mothers reported working at least part-time in 1985, while 74 percent of mothers were working at least part-time in 1987.

In 1985, the vast majority of the study participants were in 6th through 9th grade. By 1987, most were in 8th through 11th grade, although 7.5 percent were still in 6th or 7th grade, and nine adolescents were no longer in school. (See Table 1 for subgroup distributions.)

As Table 1 shows, in 1985, the percentage of mothers with completed questionnaires who reported that their child's performance was below average or failing ranged from 4.3 percent for white girls to 10.9 percent for white boys. In 1987, mothers of black boys were least likely (4.9 percent) to say their children were below average or failing, while mothers of white boys (14.7 percent) again were most likely to rank their children in the lowest two school performance categories. Overall, the percentage of mothers reporting that their children's school performance was below average or failing increased from 7.9 percent in 1985 to 10.2 percent in 1987. At the upper end of the school achievement spectrum, the percentages of mothers reporting that their children's school performance in 1985 was superior to that of other children ranged from 7.7 percent for black boys to 18.5 percent for white girls; the comparable 1987 figures ranged from 4.8 percent for black girls to 14 percent for white girls..

Table 2 about here

Mean scores and standard deviations for overall television viewing, viewing of male-oriented and female-oriented programs and relationship sexism (within subgroups) are shown in Table 2. In both years, blacks reported watching substantially more hours of television per week than did whites. Table 2 also shows the results of T-tests conducted to examine the significance of change in the attitude and television-viewing variables, within race and gender groups, between the first and second wave of the study. All three television-viewing variables showed significant decreases over time among white boys and girls. Viewing of both male-oriented and female-oriented programs declined for black girls, but among black boys, the only decrease was in viewing of female-oriented programs. Contrary to expectation, for all four subgroups attitudes regarding male-female relationships seemed to become more sexist between 1985 and 1987.

The relationships between variables were examined by including all variables -- first within waves and then over time -- in a forced-entry multiple regression. Because some variables had significant percentages of missing data, mean substitution was used to provide estimates of scores.

Table 3 about here

Cross-sectional patterns: Table 3 shows the partial correlations between television-viewing variables and the sexism scale after simultaneous controls are implemented for grade, school achievement, parental education, and maternal employment.

Relationships between sexism and male television viewing or female television viewing also were controlled for total television viewing. As the table shows, the relationships between total television viewing time, time spent with traditionally male or traditionally female television programs and sexism vary depending on the race and gender of the adolescent. For black boys, there are significant same-time partial correlations between sexism and total time spent with television in 1985. For white girls and boys, sexism is significantly related to total television viewing and to viewing of male-oriented television in 1985. Total television viewing in 1987 also is significantly related to sexism for white girls only.

All relationships between sexism and the television viewing variables are positive, which would tend to support the "cultivation" argument that adolescents who watch more television become more sexist. If only the cross-sectional relationships were examined, the positive partial correlations between sexism and male television viewing for whites in 1985 might suggest that watching traditionally male-oriented programs is particularly likely to lead to increased sexism.

Longitudinal patterns: Judging from the cross-sectional data alone, there seem to be some significant links between total viewing time, time spent watching male-oriented shows and sexism. However, when these same relationships are examined over time, a very different picture emerges.

Table 4 about here

As Table 4 shows, once again the relationships between the television viewing measures and sexism scores vary across race and gender subgroups. There are no significant relationships for black girls, regardless of whether one is attempting to predict sexist attitudes from time spent with television or to predict television viewing patterns from sexism scores.

Hypothesis 2 was not supported, since sexism scores from 1985 add nothing significant to the prediction of any of the 1987 television-viewing measures for either black or white boys. However, the results provided partial support for Hypothesis 1; for white girls, 1985 sexism scores make a significant contribution in predicting the amount of time girls spend with male-oriented programs in 1987. As we had expected, the girls who were least sexist in 1985 spent more time watching traditionally male-oriented programs in 1987.

Hypothesis 3 also was supported. As Table 4 shows, there was no relationship between T1 sexism scores and T2 total television viewing. There also was no relationship between time spent with television overall at T1 and relationship sexism scores at T2, once simultaneous controls had been introduced for grade, school achievement, SES, maternal employment, first-year sexism and viewing of male- and female-oriented programs, a finding that supports Hypothesis 4. First-year viewing of female-oriented television does have a significant effect on

relationship sexism scores for white boys and an even stronger relationship with sexism for white girls, although the direction of this relationship is somewhat unexpected. For both boys and girls, whites who reported watching more female-oriented television in 1985 had lower relationship sexism scores in 1987.

A more typical pattern emerged in the relationship between black boys' sexism scores and time spent with male-oriented programs. Black boys who watched the most male-oriented television in 1985 have the highest 1987 relationship sexism scores.

Discussion

From the standpoint of social cognitive/script theory, the most important finding in these data is that for at least one subgroup, attitudes about relationships between men and women do make an independent contribution to predicting the amount of time spent with traditionally male-oriented television programs. White girls who express non-traditional views about the relationships between men and women also tend to exhibit non-traditional program choice patterns, spending more time than the more traditional girls with sports and action-adventure programming usually preferred by male viewers.

The adolescents included in this study did not provide information about their reasons for choosing certain kinds of programs, so we can only speculate about why less sexist girls are more likely to prefer male-oriented programs. One possibility is that these girls, who could be expected to have self-concepts that are less congruent with traditional gender-

role and gender-trait stereotypes, may be looking to male-oriented programs for models of the kind of adults they wish to become. Given the traditional underrepresentation of females in both sports and action-adventure programming, however, these girls probably have to look to male characters for the strong, self-reliant models they may seek.

Previous research on children's identification with television characters suggests that adolescent girls could be finding role models in the male characters in traditionally male programs. Although studies have consistently found that boys and girls are more likely to identify with same-sex models (Signorielli, 1988), gender differences have been found in these tendencies. Miller and Reeves (1976) found that boys were more likely than girls to nominate a television character they wanted to be like when they grew up, but of the girls who nominated a model, about one fourth chose male characters. A greater likelihood for girls to identify with cross-sex models also has been demonstrated in other studies (Reeves and Greenberg, 1977; Reeves and Miller, 1978).

It seems reasonable to wonder whether boys' and girls' willingness to identify with cross-sex models will change as female television characters become more powerful. According to a recent Newsweek magazine article, the combination of an influx of female television writers and producers with industry recognition of women's disproportionate consumer decision-making power is leading to changes in television messages about women. Many of the most popular new television series feature powerful

women whose jobs are central to their lives, who do not need men to be happy, who make mistakes without apologizing and who exercise razor-sharp wits and tongues, with men their most frequent targets (Waters & Huck, 1989).

As television images of men and women change (if indeed they are changing) and as gender role and trait stereotypes become less rigid in the real world, we may find traditional male and female program preferences changing as well. For instance, current statistics on the audiences for different types of prime-time shows suggest some shifts in audience composition, although the changes may be too small to be significant. In 1984, 52 percent of the viewers of "adventure" shows were male, and the audience for "police/detective" shows were split 50/50 between males and females (Papazian, 1986). By 1988, however, men comprised only 49 percent of adventure show audiences, and audiences for police/detective shows were 55 percent female (Papazian, 1989). For 1988, at least, it seems that two of the types of programs traditionally preferred by men had audiences that were more female than male -- a hint, though certainly not conclusive evidence, that program preferences are changing.

Another important result of this study is the indication that watching specific kinds of programs does affect sex stereotypes, but overall television viewing has no independent effect. Our data show that for white teenagers, viewing traditionally female-oriented television programs seems to reduce acceptance of stereotypical beliefs about the nature of men and women and their relationships with each other. Although this

result does reveal the potential for television-viewing to affect sex-role and sex-trait beliefs, the direction of the influence seems to be opposite that predicted by cultivation theory; rather than making boys and girls more sexist, increasing time with female-oriented television appears to result in less sexist white adolescents.

On the other hand, the relationship between black boys' sexism scores and viewing of traditionally male-oriented programs is positive, albeit weak; these data suggest that watching male-oriented programs may increase sexism within at least one adolescent subgroup. Further research on this topic could help clarify whether the differing results obtained within racial groups represent differences in these groups' processing of television content or if they can be explained by other variables not included in our analyses.

It is possible that this study's use of relationship rather than occupational gender differences to define the sexism scale explains the difference between our findings and those of Morgan (1982). Although in the real world it seems that occupational gender differences are disappearing faster than traditional male-female relationships, the reverse may be true in the world of entertainment television. For adolescent viewers, male characters who are warm and nurturing and female characters who are strong and self-reliant may be easier to find than men who are nurses and "home-makers" or women who give orders and run corporations.

The differences in our results compared to those of Morgan (1982) and speculation about possible explanations for those differences point to the need for more detailed content analyses of the television programs children and adolescents are watching today. Simply counting the number of female doctors and male secretaries or the number of male versus female victims is not enough anymore. Future content analyses of television stereotyping should include information about male and female characters' motivations for behavior, whether stereotypical or not, and about the independent and interdependent aspects of their interactions with others.

More importantly, however, the variations in results across gender and racial groups point to the need for more study of the meanings adolescents make of the programs they watch. Our data showed only one relationship between sexism scores and any of the television-viewing variables for blacks, and that relationship was very different from the patterns revealed among white adolescents, suggesting that blacks interpret television of men and women differently than whites and/or that they make different uses of the information in those portrayals.

If we are to understand fully the role of television in the development of adolescents' beliefs and expectations about the roles open to men and women and the relationships between the sexes, it seems clear that we must accept the teenage viewer as an active participant in his or her own socialization. Not only do some teens seem to seek out television programs that can provide information and role models salient to their developing

self-concepts, but it also appears that adolescents whose self-concepts differ may use the same information and role models for very different purposes.

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Table 1: Descriptive statistics for demographic variables within race and gender groups

	Blacks				Whites			
	Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls	
n	228		251		586		548	
	T_1	T_2	T_1	T_2	T_1	T_2	T_1	T_2
Parental Education								
% less than high school	35.5	--	37.4	--	19.0	--	17.5	--
% high school	36.9	--	33.6	--	28.6	--	26.6	--
% business/ trade school	8.9	--	5.5	--	6.6	--	6.5	--
% some college	10.3	--	13.0	--	17.6	--	20.7	--
% college grad	3.7	--	6.3	--	14.0	--	16.7	--
% more than 4 yrs. college	4.7	--	4.2	--	14.2	--	12.0	--
Mother's employment								
% working at least part-time	63.7	69.0	64.4	64.6	63.2	75.3	69.7	78.6
Grade in school								
% 6th	35.1	5.3	27.8	1.6	27.5	1.2	19.8	1.0
% 7th	31.6	10.5	31.0	5.6	34.5	6.8	33.4	3.0
% 8th	25.3	26.3	28.6	25.2	27.5	21.8	32.1	19.6
% 9th	7.1	31.6	12.1	30.4	10.1	34.5	14.1	31.1
% 10th	0.4	21.5	0.4	26.8	0.5	25.8	0.6	28.8
% 11th	0.4	4.8		10.0		9.2		15.0
% 12th						0.5		0.5
% not in school				0.4		0.2		1.3
School achievement								
% failing	1.4	0.0	1.3	2.7	2.6	2.1	1.0	1.4
% below average	7.2	4.9	6.7	10.8	8.3	12.6	3.3	5.1
% average	56.3	61.5	50.4	56.5	44.6	47.5	36.7	40.2
% above average	27.4	23.9	32.6	25.3	32.0	25.9	40.5	39.2
% superior	7.7	9.8	8.9	4.8	12.4	11.9	18.5	14.0

Table 2: Changes in adolescents' total TV viewing and relationship sexism between 1985 and 1987 within race and gender groups, by year of response

	Blacks				Whites			
	Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls	
	T_1	T_2	T_1	T_2	T_1	T_2	T_1	T_2
Total TV viewing (hours per school week)								
Mean	53.21	52.36	50.30	49.59	42.36	38.23	40.26	32.19
Std. Dev.	22.67	22.34	21.49	24.25	19.97	21.48	18.39	18.39
(T, DF)	(0.43, 158)		(0.35, 187)		(3.71, 441)		(8.53, 438)	
p	.670		.727		.000		.000	
Female TV viewing								
Mean	6.86	6.45	8.55	8.20	5.96	5.46	8.14	7.59
Std. Dev.	2.12	2.13	2.44	2.45	1.89	1.79	2.34	2.13
(T, DF)	(2.31, 217)		(2.05, 240)		(5.65, 569)		(4.85, 540)	
p	.022		.042		.000		.000	
Male TV viewing								
Mean	8.33	8.17	6.23	5.87	7.89	7.57	5.99	5.53
Std. Dev.	2.29	2.25	2.19	2.09	2.16	2.24	1.83	1.89
(T, DF)	(.84, 217)		(2.28, 243)		(3.23, 574)		(5.48, 542)	
p	.401		.024		.001		.000	
Relationship sexism								
Mean	2.11	2.70	2.05	2.68	2.04	2.54	1.89	2.42
Std. Dev.	.53	.53	.53	.62	.43	.45	.44	.49
(T, DF)	(-13.19, 195)		(-14.79, 220)		(-21.36, 521)		(-23.37, 501)	
p	.000		.000		.000		.000	

Note: T stands for a two-tailed t-test between Time 1 and Time 2 measures for each subgroup.

Table 3: Cross-sectional (T_1 and T_2) standardized betas for TV viewing variables with relationship sexism within adolescent race and gender groups after controls by year of response

	Blacks				Whites			
	Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls	
	T_1	T_2	T_1	T_2	T_1	T_2	T_1	T_2
Total TV viewing								
Beta	.185**	.174	.045	-.054	.144***	.067	.122**	.103**
Female TV viewing								
Beta	.007	.103	-.021	-.040	.056	-.029	-.025	-.002
Male TV viewing								
Beta	.068	.027	-.011	-.154**	.088*	.062	.095*	.075

Note. Betas are standardized regression coefficients representing the relationship between television viewing and relationship sexism after controlling for the effects of parent's education, mother's employment, grade in school and school achievement. Relationships with Male and Female TV viewing also are controlled for Total TV. See Table 1 for base sample sizes per group. These sample sizes varied across analyses due to missing data.

*p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01

Table 4: Longitudinal standardized betas for adolescent television viewing variables and relationship sexism within race and gender groups after controls

	Predicting from sexism (T_1) to viewing (T_2)				Predicting from viewing (T_1) to sexism (T_2)			
	Blacks		Whites		Blacks		Whites	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Total TV viewing								
beta	-.019	-.026	-.018	.035	-.000	.028	.024	-.016
Female TV viewing								
beta	-.020	.058	-.046	-.000	.130	.009	-.114**	-.176***
Male TV viewing								
beta	-.039	-.047	.050	-.149***	.159*	-.037	-.053	-.076

Note. Betas are standardized regression coefficients representing the relationship between television viewing and relationship sexism after controlling for the effects of parent's education, mother's employment, grade in school and school achievement. Total TV viewing also is controlled for in equations predicting from or to Female TV or Male TV. In each equation, the T_1 value of the dependent variable also is controlled. See Table 1 for base sample sizes per group. These sample sizes varied across analyses due to missing data.

*p<.10. **p<.05. ***p<.01.